DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 992 UD 021 052

AUTHOR Rodriguez, Fred
TITLE The Process of School Desegregation: What Impact Does It Have on Bilingual Education? Conflict or Commitment?
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; *Desegregation Effects; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Minority Groups; *Non English Speaking; *School Desegregation

ABSTRACT

Can providing special programs for the linguistically different student conflict with the purpose or goal of school desegregation? The purpose of desegregation is to provide equal educational opportunity for all students. An essential part of desegregation is the physical restructuring of school districts, i.e., a physical rearrangement of groups of children that have not previously attended school together. When districts begin this rearrangement, however, they realize that simply putting children side by side is not enough, and that changes in the areas of curriculum, teacher training, and cost effectiveness are also necessary if truly equal opportunity is to be provided to all students. The 1974 Supreme Court mandate to provide educational opportunity for language minority children has engendered philosophical and political debate concerning various interpretations of bilingual education. Disagreements often stem from seeming conflicts between the national language imperative and the language loyalties of individual groups. Educators must balance or resolve these conflicting viewpoints. If schools are not permitted to continue their bilingual programs on the grounds that they do not fit the definition of desegregation, they are both ignoring the linguistically different student and missing the concept of equal educational opportunity. (Author/GC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SEP 2 2 1980

Dr. Fred Rodriguez
University of Kansas

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Fred Rodriguez
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED196992

THE PROCESS OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

What Impact Does It Have On Bilingual Education?

Conflict or Commitment?

The purpose of school desegregation is to provide equal educational opportunity for all students, a right guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. While most Americans accept this human right in principle, many question whether school desegregation is necessary to achieve it. Not only confused by the process of desegregation itself, a relatively new focus is being examined or at least questioned. Can providing special programs for the linguistically different student, ie., bilingual education, conflict with the purpose or goal of school desegregation?

Restructuring of the Schools

An essential part of desegregation is the restructuring of school districts including changes in school attendance zones and grade levels. This restructuring is accomplished in a number of ways which include establishing satellite attendance areas, pairing and clustering, grade-locking, establishing magnet schools, building new schools, and closing schools.

Restructuring often requires additional busing of students, but the increase is substantially less than is popularly believed. Nationally, slightly more than 50% of ALL school children are bused to school, and of that percentage less than 7% are bused for the purpose of school desegregation. In fact, of the total number of children attending public schools, only 3.6% are bused for school desegregation purposes.[#1]

UD021052

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The use of public transportation was predicated upon providing educational opportunities not available at the neighborhood school, combined with the concern for safety.[#2] While modern opponents of busing often cite safety as an argument against it, the data show that "students walking to school are three times more likely to be involved in an accident than those going to school by bus."[#3] In most school districts, desegregation plans are developed for the purpose of providing equal educational opportunity for all students. Restructuring of schools and the busing involved are merely means to that end. It is not the busing, it is the education at the end of the ride that is important.

Desegregation

The term, "desegregation" simply refers to the physical arrangement in the communities of children that have not been previously attending school together. It is a matter of logistics: children are bused and certain percentages of racial and/or ethnic group(s) are approximated in the schools. During the early stages of desegregation, most school districts spend their time on this desegregation process. When districts are rearranging students, little attention concerning programs or the quality of the curriculum is expressed.

In most cases, desegregation is a result of a compliance with a court order. Very few districts have desegregated voluntarily. To move out of segregation into desegregation is not an easy thing for many school districts to accomplish, so some courts have had to assist and sometimes deter the conservative elements in the community.

Post-Desegregation

When a district begins complying with court orders, they are moving into the second stage of desegregation, which is usually accompanied by a low-level of inservice training. One or two district-wide inservice days to prepare teachers

for the desegregation plan may be offered. These sessions may attempt to "make" teachers more sensitive to the needs of ethnically and/or linguistically different children; there may be discussions about the disadvantaged child; there may be talk of modifying the counseling program, improving school/community relations, etc. These early stages usually attempt to fit the child to the school environment - "to change the child to match the school."

When districts rearrange youngsters that have not previously attended school together, they begin to realize that simply putting children side by side does not solve many of the problems. Districts then begin to look at curriculum, intensified teacher training, cost effectiveness; they may begin to examine the school system from top to bottom. What usually follows are numerous changes attempting to create some form or symbol of equality in educational opportunity.

Bilingual Education

Language legislation in education is undergoing a drastic change. Changes from policies that increasingly demanded "English Only Policies," to mandatory biligual education in the native language of children. At least twenty-two (22) states have enacted bilingual education legislation.[#4] Language minority children are those who speak a non-English native language. Children of Mexican, Puerto Rican, American Indian and Chinese descent comprise the bulk of language minority children in the United States. The adverse effects of cultural isolation and other educational handicaps, which affect the minority and "disadvantaged" in general, are further aggravated for these children, due to their inability to adequately comprehend and communicate in the language of their instructors and textbooks. Recognizing the lack of English facility virtually precludes effective education of language minority children. The Supreme Court affirmed in 1974 (in Lau v. Nichols) that school districts are compelled under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide children who speak little or no English with special language

programs.[#5]

The mandate to provide equal educational opportunity for language minority children has engendered philosophical and political debate concerning various interpretations of bilingual education. Interpretations range from the broadest conceptualization of bilingual training and cultural enrichment for ALL children to narrow conceptions of remedial training in English as a Second Language (ESL). Somewhere between these disparate interpretations are bilingual-bicultural programs, which focus on the culture and environment of the language minority child. These programs provide instruction in the child's first language as well as in English (e.g., initial reading instruction, mathematics, social studies), taking into account the developmental levels of his/her first and second language capabilities.

Political and idological disagreements related to the alternative philosophies and interpretation of bilingual education often stem from seeming conflicts between "the language imperative of nation-building and the deeply-held (cultural and) language loyalities of individual ethnic groups.[#6]

Our role as educators, in any educational setting, integrated or desegregated, will be the difficult task of balancing or resolving these conflicting viewpoints.

Desegregated Schools and Quality Education - Isn't that our goal?

Desegregation,ideally, is the means through which children of all races and ethnic backgrounds are provided equal educational opportunity. Only learning together as equals, sharing knowledge and experiences, can children hope to develop the cultural values which will prepare them to be fully contributing members of society. The Supreme Court of the United States in the BROWN decision addressed the intangible qualities that only desegregated schooling provided. Although Brown DID NOT require improvement in curricular offering, one can conclude that

initial interests are more concerned on the "placement of students," "percentage ratios," than on the examination of the needs and programs for the students that are to be involved. It seems that all schools (specifically desegregated schools) must simultaneously re-evaluate their educational programs and services. It would be a mistake to have desegregated the schools without making other basic changes in the educational programs at the same time. It is the most opportune time to make changes. Desegregation is unavoidable; the law has to be complied with. However, in meeting the compliance, attention and commitment must be focused upon the individual student and their specific educational needs.

The Linguistically Different Student and Desegregation

If entire schools devoted to bilingual education are not permitted by the courts to continue their programs, on the grounds that such schools "do not fit" the definitions of a desegregated school; they are not only ignoring the needs of the linguistically different student, but also missing the thrust and the whole concept of providing an equal educational opportunity.

Is it not our role and function, as educators, to provide the best and the most meaningful educational experience that we can - for all our students? Haven't we heard that the "ideal" educational system is the one that "accomodates the students needs" rather than the system which attempts to fit the student to its needs?

Recently, we have begun to hear of this "dilemma" concerning bilingual education and the process of desegregation By denying bilingual education to be an integral part of school desegregation are we not being hypocritical as to the function and goals within the total concept of desegregation? It cannot and should not be permitted to be an "either/or" situation. From my perspective, there is no dilemma - when one examines the total concept of desegregation and equal educational opportunity. It would seem reasonable to me that if a school system has

linguistically different students within it's district, that school district in it's process of desegregation, would be aware, sensitive, understanding and committed to providing the best educational programs for those students. Dispersing students enrolled in bilingual schools and not providing them with similar services in desegregated schools would place an undue burden on those students and would be, more significantly, educationally unsound.

Multicultural Education

While the physical desegregation of schools may be accomplished by the firm application of laws and other legal guidelines, the core of the "problem" is basically one of human relationships and understanding - Multicultural Education. The problems of physical desegregation are difficult and must be dealt with firmly, but it is the solution to the problems of human relations that will ultimately produce quality integrated education and its consequent benefits for each student and our society. Genuine school desegregation is not merely a redistribution of bodies, but is also based on and implies a particular set of ideas, values and approaches. When activities begin to focus on changing the schools to accommodate the student,a district, in my opinion, is moving toward the concept of cultural pluralism. If a district is really serious about trying to create equal educational opportunities, then it must create a concept of education that reaches beyond the mere process of desegregation. A district must aspire to create the kind of educational program(s) that can best meet the needs of all its students, including the linguistically different student.

Bibliography

1. U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, National Institute of Education, Summary of on School Desegregation Issues. April 1976, pp. 1,2.

2. Edelman, Marian Wright, "Winston and Dovie Hudson's Dream," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1975), p. 445.

3. U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Institute of Education, Statistics on Selected Desegregation Issues, April 1976, p. 2.

4. Geffert, Hannah N. "The Current Status of U.S. Bilingual Education Legislation," Papers in Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia, 1975.

5. Bronfenbrenner, Urie, "Is Early Intervention Effective?" Influences on Human Development. Dryden Press, Hinsdale, Ill., p. 344.

6. Fox, Melvin J., Skilnick, Betty F. Language in Education: Problems and Prospects in Research and Training. The Ford Foundation, N.Y., 1975, p. 5.